



A project co-funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Research Matters (RM) supports the effective exchange and translation of sound and innovative research among a wide range of research-users. This newsletter is published on a biannual basis and contains updates about RM's projects, activities and products, with a specific focus on a topic that we believe is of interest to our partners. This current issue concentrates on **Policy Briefs** (see reverse).

RM Web Site Updates @ www.research-matters.net

Video – watch how communities learn to monitor health equity at the village level in [Video Voice: digital video](#) and the [Zambian Health Care System](#), a result of RM's and IDRC's Evaluation Unit's training and logistical support. Also, catch a flavour of [IDRC in Nairobi](#) - RM produced a video on the organization in Kenya, its people, projects and office...

Audio - listen to exclusive interviews with Health Research Capacity Strengthening (HRCS) task force leaders Prof. Gilbert Kokwaro (Kenya) and Dr. Charles Mwansambo (Malawi).

Podcasts, Toolkits, Conference Reports, Briefing Notes, Thinkpieces, Mapping Tools ...

RM ACTIVITIES

- ✦ **ZAMFOHR** – continued facilitation of this cutting-edge national-level KT institute in Zambia.
- ✦ **REACH-Policy** – support for the ongoing evolution of this East African KT process, especially in the development of country nodes.
- ✦ **HRCS** – capturing the Kenyan and Malawian experiences in designing national health research systems and institutions that will strengthen capacity for undertaking, translating and utilizing research.
- ✦ **Ethics** – exploration of the status of health research ethics in SSA.

CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS

- ✦ **Video Voice** - follow-up training in camera/computer use and editing. Lusaka, 17-19 May '07
- ✦ **REACH-Policy** - support in broad KT techniques, with a focus on preparing policy briefs (eg. male circumcision). Arusha, 19-22 June '07
- ✦ **REACH-Policy** - basic computer training for country node staff. Nairobi, 1-3 August '07.
- ✦ **EVIPNet** - co-facilitated policy brief workshop to develop syntheses on ACTs. Addis Ababa 20-22 February '08.
- ✦ **ZAMFOHR** - facilitated the development of its new Resource Centre in a series of workshops. Lusaka, 25-26 February '08.

Sneak peek...

Visit www.research-matters.net to get a glimpse of RM's involvement at the 2008 Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health, including an evidence-to-policy video and a special edition of [RealHealthNews](#)...and more!

Two Pagers: The Policy Brief

The two-pager is an appetizer. A teaser. As a video or a systematic review, a two-pager is an innovative tool researchers often use **to reach the audiences they most want to influence**. Boiling down an argument and findings into concise, interesting and easily understood points, the two-pager does not tell the audience everything they need to know. Instead, it tells them just enough to convince them that more information is necessary. If crafted well and targeted appropriately, a two-pager should achieve its principal goal - leaving its readers wanting more.

What is the Context?

Context mapping techniques help us to think through the environment surrounding our research. This includes consideration of **audience** - who they are, what they need, and how best to reach them. Knowing the context also helps us to identify other essential elements. Are there **other findings** that support our own? Is there a **systematic review**, for instance, that could enhance our own policy recommendations?

Types of Two-Pagers

Press Releases - simple language, in the style of a newspaper article highlighting the significance of the findings, usually not the findings themselves.

Briefing Notes - an extended abstract for a scientific audience.

Policy Briefs - in simple terms the science, the potential policies, and a discussion of how to bridge the two.

Problems ← Possibilities → Policies

The **Policy Brief** has become a prominent Knowledge Translation tool, favoured for the way it can convert complex findings into simple, action-oriented messages. Though some policy briefs are up to eight pages long - and the end-result of intensive training courses - most policy briefs provide a clear and concise overview of the problem, a discussion of the findings and their implications, and then suggestions for implementation - with, where possible, clear cost implications.

✓ The ideal policy brief:

1. Understands its audience; it uses the right language and tone.
2. Contextualizes its findings environmentally (with respect to national events, agendas) and scientifically (how it adds to a wider pool of knowledge and is supported by systematic reviews).
3. Forms a coherent argument that ends in clear policy options.
4. Provides easy reference to supporting materials and information.
5. Has identified clear channels for dissemination **before** it's written.

Want more information on policy briefs? RM's **Knowledge Translation Toolkit** is going through its final draft stages before final publication in September '08 - in English and French. For a sneak peek at it now, email any of the RM Team, or request your copy of the final toolkit today!

Nasreen Jessani
njessani@idrc.or.ke
Graham Reid
greid@idrc.or.ke
Portia Taylor
ptaylor@idrc.ca